



## As Delivered Remarks of PDDNI Stephanie O'Sullivan at the 2015 IC Pride LGBTQA Summit

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### Intelligence Community Pride; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Summit

May 6, 2015

#### NRO Headquarters, Chantilly, Va

Thank you for the introduction and for welcoming me here today in place of Director Clapper. He had a personal issue that pulled him away, and there is simply no way he could be here today. I know it's the standard line to say, "I know he wishes he could be here." In this case, that's a vast understatement. He was very much looking forward to making this speech – which now, I get to make. [laughter]

He's talked a lot about how much last year's LGBTQA Summit meant to him, and he asked me to relay some things. Over the past 14 months, he's spent a good bit of time ruminating on that speech, and he told me that what he said last year – he's felt that way for years, decades. But he's never before spoken out in public like that about his experiences.

He said it took him a while to process just how much the injustice he'd seen during his career bothered him, particularly his personal experience 50 years ago when he was a very young lieutenant, when he had to process the dishonorable discharges of two fine airmen who had been "outed" as homosexuals.

They were model airmen: superb Russian linguists and meticulous about their military responsibilities. And they loved serving their country. He says that five decades later, it still stings him to think of being asked to out-process them. It was a waste of superb talent, as well as a profound injustice.

Decades later, when Director Clapper was wing commander for all Air Force troops at NSA, he saw Admiral Bobby Inman take a stand and go in a different direction. The standing logic at the time was that anyone who was gay was open to blackmail and therefore should not hold a security clearance.

Of course that is and was very flawed logic. The main reason gay clearance holders were open to blackmail is because, if anyone found out their orientation, they'd lose their clearance. You'd lose your clearance, because of the threat of losing your clearance. [laughter]

It's funny, in a tragic sense, because the consequences are terrible.

So, when DNI Clapper was Colonel Clapper, Wing Commander at NSA, and a gifted



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crypto-mathematician there was outed and lost his clearance, NSA Director Bobby Inman restored his clearance, asking only that this officer acknowledge his sexual orientation to his coworkers, so that there was no longer any threat of blackmail.

Of course, that's a big "only." That forced the officer to follow someone else's timeline with his very personal process of coming out. But it was a courageous and at the time unprecedented decision.

A decade later, (Jim Clapper has a lot of "decades" in this business) [laughter], he was profoundly grateful for the example Inman set, because as the Chief of Air Force Intelligence, then-General Clapper was given a similar opportunity to correct an injustice, by restoring the clearance of a civilian employee who'd been outed.

He says he doesn't think that act makes up for out-processing the two airmen at the start of his career, but he says with that second chance, he had the power to do something about it. So he did. And this is a quote from Director Clapper, "Damn, it felt good." [laughter and applause]

And he says more importantly, it was the right thing to do. And it helped the Air Force retain talent they desperately needed. He says, in the weeks and months after that decision, he wore it as a badge of honor when his fellow General and Flag Officers gave him a hard time about it.

At the 2014 LGBTQA Summit here, he talked with you about those experiences and a few others. He says it felt good to him to get those things off his chest and out in the open. So the first thing he asked me to pass on is his appreciation for that invitation to speak last March. I believe that speech was cathartic for him. He used the term, "cleansing."

I think he understands the influence he has as DNI, but he underestimates the impact he can have personally, because he's been a bit taken aback by how much that discussion meant to you. This February, when he was on travel in Paris, an NSA integree caught him between meetings and, with a good deal of emotion, said she'd been at the March summit, 11 months earlier. She said hearing him talk about his experiences made a huge impact on her, and the way she felt about the Intelligence Community, and her career choice to join this community.

That's fantastic, and it shows, not only what an impact he can have, but the impact you have by holding this summit, and by establishing an LGBTQA community in the IC.

I want to give you the words the DNI had planned to say about that interaction in Paris and to her: "I'm amazed and humbled that I – a 74-year-old, straight, white man – can say anything that has that kind of impact on you, because I can only imagine the obstacles you've had to



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overcome, not for your personal gain, but so that you can serve our country. You inspire me, I believe, far more than I could inspire you." And since you all know him, you know he means that sincerely.

That passion reminds me of another senior leader I think we can find inspiration in. In the fall of 2012, OPM Director John Berry came to visit our office and spoke at an ODNI town hall. His enthusiasm for the federal workforce was evident in his remarks. When he said the government is a great place to work, he wasn't just feeding us a line.

He said he'd taken a visit to Google's campus and told an auditorium full of their employees that, for a small pay cut [laughter], and fewer stock options [laughter] they could do truly meaningful work as part of the federal workforce. As you can imagine, that's a bit of a tough sell to make on Google's home turf, but he meant it.

At our town hall, John talked about working to streamline federal hiring practices and boost hiring of veterans, about making recruitment of students and recent graduates easier and about improving the diversity of the federal workforce. What John didn't mention in his speech was his own personal story. But with our very first question, someone from my office thanked him for being "out" as the most-senior openly-gay official in the history of the federal government.

We asked John what obstacles he'd had to overcome to achieve his position. John laughed and talked about going through his very first security clearance interview, just 90 days after President Clinton signed the executive order to allow people to hold a clearance while serving openly. John said his security interviewers were more nervous than he was. [laughter] They had no idea what questions they could or couldn't ask him. [laughter] And being John, he ended up having to comfort them [laughter] and tell them it would be okay. [laughter]

We then asked John what advice he would give to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees in the IC as they progress through their careers. He advised everyone, and this advice stands for everyone in this room, no matter what orientation, background, or experiences you've had, "Be open with who you are, because life is simply too short not to be yourself." Our auditorium erupted with applause that went on for almost a minute. I was proud of us for that.

I started my career as an engineer, contracted to work for the Office of Naval Intelligence. I worked as an ONI civilian, and then joined the CIA through the directorate of science and technology. I've got far fewer decades than DNI Clapper, [laughter], okay, two fewer, [laughter], but I've been around a while. And I've known many gay, and some bisexual, men and women; both civilians and uniformed military.



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I cannot imagine the stress they were forced to endure to serve their country. It's simply incomprehensible to me, trying to keep and live with such a secret. It was wrong to have compelled people to live that way under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and under our regulations to hold clearances. I'm glad those things are in our past. And I'm happy that those draconian rules also no longer hang over the heads of transgender employees.

By the way, I just found out, getting ready for today – that there's a label for me. Apparently, I am "Cis-gender." [applause, extended applause]

That means my body, the gender I was assigned at birth, and my personal identity all match. It was really only a few years ago that I, and many of us, first thought about how it would feel if those didn't match.

The past couple of years have been huge for the transgender community. Case law precedents that protects transgender employees from being fired have been stacking up. And a 2012 ruling on Title 12 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission extends protections to transgender workers in all 50 states.

Then, in May of 2013, the diagnosis manual for psychology stopped listing being transgender as a "mental disorder." That was a big step forward, for the medical establishment to decide that, if your body and your assignment don't match your identity, there are much more constructive ways to help you than with a diagnosis of mental illness. It's good for the medical establishment to catch up to something most people have known for a long time.

Of course, that won't be the end of the struggle. We know that, because homosexuality was pulled from the list of "disorders" in 1973, and yet there are still outliers that try to "cure" homosexuality. So that, just a month ago, President Obama took a stand and called for an end to "conversion therapy." I like having a boss who publicly does things I'm proud of.

In January, for the first time ever, the President used the word "transgender" in his State of the Union speech. He was talking about how we as Americans respect human dignity, and he said, "That's why we defend free speech and advocate for political prisoners, and condemn the persecution of women or religious minorities or people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender." The President's remarks show how, just in the past few years, we as a society have become much more attuned to how being transgender is simply a part of the human experience.

And very recently, Bruce Jenner has brought this into the public consciousness. [Note: this



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speech was delivered two weeks after Ms. Jenner came out as transgender and three weeks before she changed her name to Caitlyn.]

I think we could have a reasonable debate about whether the media circus is a good thing or not, but nationally, I think we're ready for the discussion. I think the national transgender community has laid a lot of the groundwork to define terms and help us understand. And, media circus or not, personally I think airing the difficulties that transgender people experience is a good thing.

I'm happy, for instance, we can have a public discussion about "passing," specifically the idea that transgender people don't need, and shouldn't feel the need for other people to immediately identify them with the gender that they identify with. Transgender people can, in fact, dress and present according to who they are, and nothing that other people believe should drive what they do. Some people may not be ready to hear that message, but I don't consider that to be my opinion. That's just truth.

Just five or 10 years ago, it was acceptable for pop culture to use confusion over perceived sex and gender for low-brow comedy. But the transgender community has made a huge, positive impact in the past few years, and when Bruce Jenner came out with his transition, the few Paleolithic comedians who tried to make a joke of it very quickly found out how unacceptable that is today.

That's a lot of progress, very quickly made. However, just because mainstream America is learning what actions and reactions are unacceptable, that doesn't mean everyone knows how to be supportive. That's why I'm particularly proud of the work your transgender working group has done since it stood up after the first IC LGBTQA Summit in 2012.

You filled a much needed gap with your publication of your, "Best Practices Guide for Transgender Employees, their Colleagues, and Managers," and I think more importantly, you've formed what I'd have to describe as a "cross-agency rapid-response team" [laughter], to help, across the community, anyone considering gender transition, and to help that person's managers and coworkers. Beyond a sense of duty, that shows a true love for our Intelligence Community and for the people who work here. So, thank you.

So I've addressed the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender members of this alliance. I want to take just a couple minutes to talk to the allies, the people who put the "A" in "LGBTQA." [laughter].

First, I'd like to officially add my name to your ranks. [applause] Thank you. [continued]



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applause] That's humbling. [continued applause]

I'd like to add my name by repeating something the DNI said last year: "There's no way I can ever really know what members of the LGBT community go through and have gone through, but I can absolutely proclaim myself to be an ally." I'm proud to be one, and I'm proud of everyone else who's here today as an ally, because we, as allies, need to find a way to translate personal support into public advocacy.

The director and I both spend a lot of time talking about the "business case" for diversity in the Intelligence Community. Put simply, if we get together a bunch of people who all look and think alike to brainstorm about some problems we have, we'll all come up with similar ideas about what to do. If you look back at prominent intelligence failures, particularly as laid out by the Iraq WMD Commission, you'll see that each time, diverse thinking by people with diverse life experiences might have prevented the mistakes we made.

But here's an important distinction: hiring a diverse workforce is not enough. We won't reap the benefits of that diversity unless we also foster a culture of inclusion. People who belong to a minority group in our IC, whether that's because of their national origin, native language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, need to feel welcome in our community, and they need to know they don't need to hide what makes them unique. It's from our differences that we draw our strengths. That's the "business and mission case" for diversity.

To me, there's an equally important reason to convert personal support into public advocacy. It's the right thing to do, to treat everyone, especially IC professionals, with dignity and respect. That may mean, if you pass someone cracking an inappropriate joke in the hallway, you stop and say, "That's not how we act here." Or that may mean actually speaking out in public.

As a rule, the director and I try not to take ourselves or the positions we occupy too seriously, but we realize that we can and should use our positions as, (and this is how Director Clapper puts it), a "bully pulpit" when the occasion calls for it.

I do have to remind him he's not actually old enough to have been Teddy Roosevelt's principal intelligence advisor. [laughter]

This occasion calls for using that bully pulpit. After the 2014 LGBTA Summit, we published his remarks on ODNI's public website, and we got outside publications to print them as well. I intend to continue talking about IC pride after today's summit, and Director Clapper has assured me that he'll be doing the same for the 87 weeks he has left to serve this community;





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not that he's counting. [laughter]

By the way, I love the name of this group: IC Pride. I checked online for a definition of gay pride or LGBT pride, and I found this: "It's is the positive stance against discrimination and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, to promote their self-affirmation, dignity, equality rights, increase their visibility as a social group, build community, and celebrate sexual diversity and gender variance."

The phrase in there that jumped out at me was, "build community." That's been our goal at ODNI, building a community of diverse intelligence agencies. Each Intelligence Community agency and element has its own unique intelligence tradecraft that it brings to the table. And we work best, as a community, when we celebrate how each agency is different, and we take advantage of the strengths inherent in their different cultures and ways of doing business. That's true at a macro level with agencies and at a micro level with individual intelligence officers.

So, going forward, I plan to be even more public with my support, because it's good for our community to be inclusive, and because it's right for our IC to welcome everyone who's a member. We should all take pride in doing so.

The work you do here, work that cuts across agency lines and brings people together as a community, is an important part of intelligence integration. That goes for the transgender working group, the ally engagement group, the recruitment and retention group, the communications and technology group, and the group that put this summit together. Thank you all for the work you do every day, and particularly for the work you're doing with IC Pride and at today's summit.

I want to leave you with a few words from the President. Two weeks ago, my office celebrated our tenth anniversary, and our celebration was capped off by a visit from President Obama. He spoke to our workforce and asked us to go out to all the agencies and pass along his message.

He said first to tell you – simply – "You can take great pride in your service."

He talked about integrity. He said, "The work you provide is vital for me being able to make good decisions. And the fact that the work you prepare is giving it to me straight, that it doesn't look at the world through rose-colored glasses, that it doesn't exaggerate threats, but doesn't underplay the significant challenges that we face around the world – that's vitally important to me."



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Then he talked about the great successes we've had over the past few years ... and the great challenges, and he wrapped up with this message. He said, "I know what you do. We're more secure because of your service. We're more secure because of your patriotism and your professionalism. And I'm grateful for that."

So that's the President's message he wanted me to pass along, and because of the challenges we've faced over the past few years, that message comes from a President who has a better understanding of how the intelligence enterprise works than any of his predecessors.

I know he'd agree with me, that in our 21<sup>st</sup> Century world, your work here with IC Pride is critical to our Intelligence Community and to the defense of our nation. So I want to leave you with the President's words: "You can all take great pride in your service." Thank you.

[applause, then standing ovation]